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Editorial..

Changing seasons in a changing world..

The events of September 2001 will probably remain part of our world's history books like a blot of ink on a document. My habit of finding a positive theme to write an editorial on, (common to both our countries New Zealand and Switzerland) is sorely tested just now, as I ward off the images of terrorism, destruction, sorrow and pain because of recent events in America. Whenever I look up at a passing airplane I get flashbacks of those hijacked airplanes smashing into the famous New York tower buildings. Seldom have television images and documentaries left such a disturbing image in my mind as the events dated 11 September 2001....

- So, the world will never be the same again, we are told. And of course coming events on the world's

stage are as hard to predict as ever in the light of a revenge seeking America on her enemies yet to be found and cornered.

Despite all the dire predictions, even words of war, we must not worry unnecessarily. There is always that little word "if"....! If this happens or the other....?! Are we not fortunate in our country of adoption that we can enjoy the changing seasons from Winter to Spring just now. New Zealand is ablaze with colour once again. Have you taken time out to admire a beautiful bush of rhododendrons lately? Did you notice how the camellias flowered abundantly once again, as they did in our area? Just yesterday I saw a most magnificent magnolia tree in full bloom stretching its branches towards the blue sky. And what made the colours of the flowering shrubs and plants more intensive for me was the fact that I walked with friends and family

along the public garden setting. Once again the 'old saying' comes to mind "*geteilte Freude ist doppelte Freude*" or freely translated "*shared pleasure doubles in value*".

And while we in New Zealand can take our minds off world events thanks to the promising days of Springtime, our people in Switzerland can enjoy the changing season from Summer to Autumn. There will be traditional festivities as some of us will remember clearly. There will be the '*Alpabfahrt*' the descent of cattle from alpine pastures to lower areas. In various parts of Switzerland there will be the old traditional celebration of '*Chästeilet*' the distribution of alpine cheese among the farmers. Another folcloristic celebration in parts of our 'homeland' is the "*Sichlete*" (in reality this task is all done by the combine harvester).

For the Swiss, one of the more spiritual happenings in autumn is the '*Eidgenössische Bettag*', since 1796, a day (usually the third Sunday in September) to reflect on spiritual values. During October the Swiss will celebrate the wine-harvest such as the "*Festa della vendemmia*" at Lugano. Later still (traditionally on the fourth Monday of November) the people of Berne will celebrate the "*Zibelemärit*", the sale and purchase of onions in the streets of the Capital.

- Such celebrations of autumn not only bring lots of tourists but also help to foster companionship among the Swiss population.

With all the dark shadows streaking across the world's stage we may well ponder the following words the Swiss would have found appropriate on their "*Bettag*", their federal day of prayer and reflections on 16 September 2001:

O Gott, streck aus deine milde Hand und segne gnädig Leut und Land. Lass alle Schuld vergeben sein, denk an die grosse Liebe dein.

Lass aller Menschen Tun gedeihn, ihr Werk von dir behütet sein.

Sei jedem nah mit deiner Kraft, dass er getreu das Rechte schafft.

Herr, segne auch mit deiner Hand, was wächst und reift in unserm Land. Wend ab Frost, Blitz und Hagelschlag und alles was uns schaden mag.

Behüt die Welt for Krieg und Streit, vor Hunger, Krankheit, Hass und Neid, gib dass in Fried und Einigkeit dir diene alle Christenheit.

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